

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY Directorate of Intelligence 14 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina (As of 1600 EDST)
No. 12

VIETNAM

- Communist attacks that began yesterday against units of the South Vietnamese 18th Division around Xuan Loc are continuing. One battalion of the division's 52nd Regiment fighting near Route 20 has been cut off and remains isolated. A government armor unit currently engaged in clearing Route 1 near the junction of Route 20, is attempting to reach the surrounded battalion. Saigon also is moving a regiment of the 5th Division into the area west of Xuan Loc and it is making slow progress in moving to reinforce a government artillery position near Route 1. South of Xuan Loc, the 1st Airborne Brigade has been engaged in heavy fighting as they attempt to clear the southern approaches to the city. South Vietnamese artillery airlifted into positions south of Xuan Loc have been directing fire at the southern approach routes which Communist forces have been using.
- 2. South Vietnamese forces operating along Routes 1 and 20 near Xuan Loc on April 14 captured documents which indicated that a battalion from the North /ietnamese 325th Division is in that area. The 325th took part in the assaults on Hue and Da Nang in northern South Vietnam in late March. While it could have sent some units South, there have been no other indications of such a movement by the division. Moreover, on April 12, part of the 325th Division was still located in Quang Tri Province.

NSA review(s) completed.

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State Department review(s) completed.	
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Pressure Increasing on Phan Rang

- 3. Phan Rang City was hit by scattered Communist long-range artillery fire on April 14. North Vietnamese tanks have been spotted 12 miles north of the city and these vehicles may be moving to join Communist infantry troops assembling for attacks on the western approaches to the city. All South Vietnamese units and commanders are reported to be reacting well to the situation and air strikes are being targeted against the Communist artillery positions.
- 4. General Toan, the Military Region 3 commander who now has the responsibility for both Phan Rang and Phan Thiet, is unhappy with Saigon's order to withdraw the 2nd Airborne Brigade from Phan Rang. Some senior regional officials have compared this decision to the withdrawal of the Airborne Division from MR-1 which led to the collapse of government forces there. Toan feels that without the airborne, Phan Rang cannot be held against the strong Communist attacks which now appear to be shaping up. The city's major importance to the government is the airbase from which airstrikes are being launched against Communist forces in Military Region 3.

Tay Ninh Shelled

5. Meanwhile, to the northwest of Saigon, the Communists on April 14 lobbed 50 or so rounds of rocket and artillery fire into Tay Ninh City damaging a hospital and destroying an ammunition bunker. Only one regiment of the South Vietnamese 25th Division remains in Tay Ninh City -- the remainder has been deployed into southern Tay Ninh Province in anticipation of a Communist effort to cut the roads linking Tay Ninh with Saigon.

Government Successes in the Delta

6. All of Route 4 is now open to traffic. Although many of the South Vietnamese forces around Can Tho have been primarily in a defensive posture, they have protected the populated areas and important roads and have inflicted heavy casualties

on the enemy. This jovernment success has raised the morale of all ranks in much of the region.

- 7. In addition to reopening Route 4 just north of Can Tho, seven South Vietnamese infantry and armor battalions swept into Communist-held areas of Vinh Long Province, driving enemy forces away from artillery positions used to shell Can Tho. Regional officials now feel the North Vietnamese 4th Division has lost much of its capability to threaten Can Tho City. Although orders from the 4th Division continue to refer to preparations for battle, most of the division is pulling back. In some cases, the withdrawing units have left behind much of their equipment, ammunition, and food; some units reportedly broke and ran.
 - 8. It now appears that the government has won the opening round in the delta. Its units have not only stood and fought, withstood enemy attacks, but have also driven attacking Communist forces back from positions threatening populated areas and major highways.

Attacks on Saigon

- 9. Recent reporting continues to refer to Communist plans to carry out attacks inside Saigon in the near future. While the Communists clearly have the capability of infiltrating small units, such as sappers, into the capital area, there are as yet no indications of Communist main force units moving into position for direct attacks on Saigon itself.
- 10. One report claims that "armed units" are now infiltrating Saigon, but they will not begin their attacks until government units have been defeated in battles outside the city.

 the Communists hope to get Saigon to commit all of its reserves along major approaches to the capital where the Communists could attrite them, leaving Saigon with few forces to defend the capital.
- 11. Most Communist units are now deployed along the southern, western, and eastern approaches to the capital. Moreover, in the fighting at Xuan Loc, government units so far have acquitted themselves well and inflicted heavy losses

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Approved For Release 2005/04/22 : CIA-RDP86T00608R000300070

on the Communists.

The Political Situation

- 12. President Thieu formally accepted the new government of Nguyen Ba Can today in swearing-in ceremonies at the presidential palace. In his acceptance speech, Thieu told his audience that he fully intended to stay on as president and that he did not view his new ministers as comprising "a transitional government." He reiterated his earlier offer of negotiations with the Communists under the Paris Accords but emphasized that Saigon will never "ask for surrender."
- 13. He also included an appeal for additional US assistance, stating that so long as the South Vietnamese fight for their freedom, the US has "the obligation of a big ally to help us to the end." In a direct appeal to the US Congress, he said that only "a stable and strong South Vietnam" can compel the Communists to stop fighting and resume negotiations. Can's remarks essentially echoed those of Thieu's.

CAMBODIA

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14. Reporting on the tactical situation around Phnom Penh remains confused. Despite denials by the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok -- which claims to be in direct contact with Phnom Penh -- some news agencies are still alleging that insurgent troops have entered the capital's outskirts.

15. The US Embassy in Bangkok today received a telegram from two US correspondents who remained in Phnom Penh requesting that aircraft be dispatched to Pochentong to evacuate 500 orphans.

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